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Letter dated 14 January 2004 from the Permanent Representative of Lebanon to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General

I have the honour to inform you that the Government of Lebanon is requesting the Security Council to extend the mandate of the United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon (UNIFIL), which expires on 31 January 2004, for a further interim period of six months, on the basis of the provisions of Security Council resolutions 425 (1978) and 426 (1978), dated 19 March 1978, and in view of the fact that the continued deployment of UNIFIL is necessary in order for it to complete the mandate with which it was entrusted by those two Security Council resolutions. This request is consistent with the judicious conclusions contained in your periodic reports to the Security Council to the effect that a major part of the mandate of UNIFIL has not been completed, particularly with respect to "the restoration of lasting peace and security" in the region. The request is particularly urgent in the light of the serious violations and provocations committed by land, sea and air on a daily basis by Israel across the Blue Line which are a continuing aggression against the sovereignty of Lebanon, a threat to its security and peace and a blatant violation of Security Council resolution 425 (1978).

In this context, Lebanon emphasizes that the maintenance of the mandate of the United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon, as provided for in the two above-mentioned resolutions, will be a reaffirmation of the international community's commitment to the restoration of Lebanon's sovereignty over its entire territory and of the strong support given by the Security Council in its successive resolutions to the territorial security, sovereignty and political independence of Lebanon within internationally recognized borders, most recently in its resolution 1496 (2003).

Lebanon pays tribute to the ongoing contribution of the United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon in mine removal operations and to the efforts made by donor countries in that regard. Lebanon requests the Security Council to exert pressure on Israel to produce maps and other documents showing the location of the mines left behind by the Israeli occupation of Lebanese territory, the existence of large numbers of which has been reported to the United Nations. These mines are continuing to cause death and injury to Lebanese civilians, and to restrict their freedom of activity and movement, as well as impeding the freedom of travel of UNIFIL and the fulfilment of its mandate in its area of operation. They also constitute a danger to the life of individuals working there and to those working on mine clearance. Lebanon also requests the Security Council to endeavour to secure the release of Lebanese nationals who have been detained illegally for many years in

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Israeli prisons in flagrant breach of the Geneva Conventions of 1949 and their Additional Protocols.

Lebanon renews its commitment to the peace process in the Middle East with a view to the attainment of a comprehensive and just peace in the region based on the resolutions of the United Nations and on the authority of the Madrid Conference and in accordance with the comprehensive Arab peace initiative which was adopted unanimously at the Beirut Summit on 28 March 2002.

I avail myself of this opportunity to pay tribute, on behalf of the Lebanese Government, to the efforts made by the leadership and individual members of UNIFIL, and to the troop-contributing countries for their efforts and sacrifices in the implementation of its mandate.

The Government of Lebanon also wishes to convey to you its appreciation for your tireless efforts in support of the role of UNIFIL in southern Lebanon.

I should be grateful if you would have this letter circulated as a document of the Security Council.

(*Signed*) Sami **Kronfol**
Ambassador
Permanent Representative